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Security Council
Fifty-first Year

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New York

President:	Sir John Weston	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Nkgowe
	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Ettel
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Mano Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wibisono
	Italy	Mr. Casardi
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United States of America	Mrs. Albright

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1996/47 and Add.1)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1996/47 and Add.1)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Swaziland, Togo and Tunisia in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sirleaf (Liberia) took a seat at the Council table; Mrs. Kaba (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic), Mr. Eteffa (Ethiopia), Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Mr. Lamptey (Ghana), Mrs. Camara (Guinea), Mr. Avewah (Nigeria), Mr. Cissé (Senegal), Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland), Mr. Ta'ama (Togo) and Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

The purpose of this meeting is to allow a first consideration of the fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, which is before members in documents S/1996/47 and Addendum 1.

The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Liberian National Transitional Government, Mr. Momolu S. V. Sirleaf, whom I welcome and on whom I now call.

Mr. Sirleaf (Liberia): It is an honour and privilege for me to address the Security Council as it considers the situation in Liberia, which is vividly captured in the fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), contained in document S/1996/47 of 23 January 1996.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of January. Already your tenure has produced positive results. We welcome the innovation in the working methods of the Council which, *inter alia*, affords interested delegations an opportunity to participate in open deliberations of the Council prior to its decisions on matters bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security. Undoubtedly, this approach promotes transparency, broadens participation in the Council's work, and points towards the eventual enlargement and democratization of the Council.

I would also like to extend to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the sincere gratitude of the Council of State and the people of Liberia for his deep personal concern with, and untiring involvement in the search for a durable, peaceful solution to the Liberian civil war. In particular, we recall with thanks his initiatives which facilitated the convening of the Conference on Assistance to Liberia, during which financial and other pledges were made in support of the Abuja Agreement, the disarmament and demobilization processes, the recovery and rehabilitation needs of the country, and assistance to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the execution of its mandate. We also applaud Mr. Boutros-Ghali for his visit to Liberia on 29 November 1995, another manifestation of his interest, which resulted in the clarification of relevant issues in the peace process.

In my address to the General Assembly during its fiftieth session, I said:

> "The Abuja Agreement will hold and usher in a new dawn for Liberia; but even if it did not hold, we would still pursue peace, [and] ignore those who prefer war to peace ..." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 25th meeting, p. 10)*

We also apprised the Assembly that the installation of the Council of State last September pointed towards a final peaceful resolution of the Liberian crisis and raised the hopes of Liberians, who believe that the process is now irreversible. The Liberian civil war is virtually over.

Today, I reiterate to the Security Council and the international community that the Council of State remains firmly committed to the terms of the Abuja Agreement, and will employ its best efforts to ensure that the peace process is not derailed. In this connection, the Council of State considers the recent skirmishes in Tubmanburg and other areas of the country as unfortunate incidents which will not deprive the people of Liberia of the peace they have longed for for the last six years. We have therefore held consultations with the disaffected party in order to hear its grievances and find acceptable peaceful means to address them. Additionally, the Council of State has informed that party, in unambiguous terms, that the peace process will proceed according to the Abuja Agreement.

We are not unmindful that the war was waged by Liberians against themselves, and of the consequent toll it has exacted from countries of the West African subregion, which, through ECOMOG, provided the enabling environment for Liberians to harmonize their differences by way of peaceful negotiations. We deeply appreciate the many sacrifices which ECOWAS member States continue to make for the restoration of peace in the country.

We are also grateful to the United Nations, its specialized agencies and Member States for the provision of humanitarian assistance in the form of food, medicines and so on. However, as Liberians endeavour to make the transition from war to peace, we appeal to the international community to empathize with the circumstances now obtaining in the country.

Some degree of anxiety still exists within and among the warring factions. As the war wanes, combatants have their anxious moments. What life awaits them after years of knowing only armed confrontation? We have to abate their fears, and we stand in need of substantial assistance to provide productive alternatives in civil society.

Since 1990, ECOMOG has kept the peace in Liberia. It has had to do so with the meagre resources of the troop-contributing countries. Over and over again, appeals have been made to the international community to supplement the wherewithal provided by ECOWAS in order to advance the peace process in all of its terms. As the peace process is now at a critical juncture, we appeal to the international community to be more understanding and lend the necessary assistance for ECOMOG to carry out its mandate in pursuance of the Abuja Agreement.

ECOWAS has taken on an unprecedented task. It has given concrete expression to the much-heralded talk about cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this respect, my delegation believes that the international community has more to gain from ECOWAS's success in Liberia if the necessary assistance is provided.

In conclusion, I wish to re-emphasize that the Council of State has given its solemn pledge to the Liberian people that it will abide by the Abuja Agreement. The Council has also pledged its fullest support for the ECOWAS peace initiative, and is awaiting the signing of the status-of-forces agreement. While realizing that Liberians are ultimately responsible for restoring peace and democracy in their country, we need the Council's help to jump start the process of disarmament and demobilization, social and economic rehabilitation and the holding of national elections that will return the country to civil administration under the rule of law.

The delegation of Liberia commends to the Council the recommendation of the Secretary-General that UNOMIL's mandate be extended until 31 May 1996, and joins in his appeal for increased support to ECOMOG. For our part, I pledge anew the commitment of the Council of State to the full implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

The President: I thank the representative of Liberia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mrs. Albright (United States of America): The Council has convened today to examine, among a wider group of Member States, the Secretary-General's fifteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and to discuss the future of Liberia.

I have just returned from a trip to Africa, including Liberia. President Clinton asked me to travel to Liberia to assess the situation there. Although I have not yet reported to President Clinton, I would like to express today some observations and reflections on the situation in Liberia.

First, I share many of the views set forth in the Secretary-General's report. The peace process is indeed at a critical juncture, as he wrote,

> "and the full support of all concerned will be required to overcome the recent setbacks." (*S/1996/47, para. 42*)

The Secretary-General's observations about maintaining the cease-fire, the need for more resources to help the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to fulfil its responsibilities effectively and the need to reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian society: these are all central to finding a lasting peace in Liberia.

I must admit that I am both sceptical and hopeful about the prospects for peace in Liberia. On the one hand, Liberia appears to have hit rock-bottom. On the other, members of the Council of State seem to be working well together and all claim, at least, to be committed to peace. Thus far, they are acting as though they are committed. Yet it is unclear whether their commitment will be sustained as disarmament begins and elections approach. It is also not certain that each of the main warlords can maintain control of his fighters. Some who feel left out of the process may be capable of undoing it.

The conflict in Liberia is among the élites, not among the people. They are fighting not over ideology, but over personal power. That creates both risks and opportunities. The risks are that the drive for personal power, particularly among the extremists, can lead to further carnage and destruction with little interest in preserving or building society. There is opportunity in the fact that it is difficult to sustain a power struggle on personal ambition alone. Ultimately, the people want peace in the absence of any ideological goal. The people of Liberia want peace.

In my meeting with the Council of State, I stressed the importance of the Council's role in keeping the peace process on track so that ECOMOG deployment — temporarily interrupted by fighting and attacks on civilians in various areas by the ULIMO followers of General Johnson — can recommence. I said that, although the United States and the international community remain committed to helping Liberia, only Liberians can make the peace. I told them that the international community is losing its patience. The Abuja peace process that took so long to negotiate is now at a critical state of implementation. The moderates will have to perform better if they are to sustain the support of the international community.

The members of the Council of State offered many reasons for the delay in disarmament and demobilization. Everyone but themselves was to blame. My message to them was simple: "No more excuses." There can be no further delay in implementing the most important provisions of the Abuja Agreement, namely, those on disarmament and demobilization. As far as the United States is concerned, the word "delay" can no longer be part of the vocabulary of the Council of State. Otherwise, the fragile peace that does exist will collapse.

Overall, at least for now, I found ECOMOG performing well. It seems to be playing a neutral and constructive role now, as opposed to at various times in the past. Despite ECOMOG's losses in recent weeks, I was impressed by General Inienger's resolve to move forward in the face of adversity. We believe that ECOMOG deserves our support, both for the important role it is now playing in Liberia and because it represents an important precedent in regional peace-keeping that should be encouraged.

We believe, however, that ECOMOG's force structure should be more diversified among member States of the region if it is to constitute an authentic regional peace-keeping operation worthy of international support. We also believe that ECOMOG must enter into a status-of-forces agreement with the Liberian National Transitional Government so that ECOMOG's operations in Liberia are appropriately regulated.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report, the international community

> "must provide the resources necessary to enable ECOMOG to fulfil its responsibilities effectively". (*ibid.*)

In recent years, the United States has provided $420 million in humanitarian assistance and $60 million in support of ECOMOG's peace-keeping activities. On 27 October, the United States pledged an additional $75 million to support peace, including $10 million to assist ECOMOG logistically. The vehicles ECOMOG desperately needs to facilitate disarmament and demobilization have begun to arrive under the $10 million pledge and we hope to provide a total of up to 100 vehicles within the near future. In fact, the deployment of ECOMOG troops in December was made

possible only by using trucks leased by my Government through the assistance of the United Nations. However, I said while in Monrovia that the United States has no intention of allowing its logistical support to be squandered by a failure of political will — by any side — to achieve the objectives of the Abuja Agreement.

The United States calls upon all other Member States to provide similar assistance as quickly as possible. The assistance is needed not only for ECOMOG itself, but also to provide a more attractive demobilization package for ex-combatants.

I also want to acknowledge the courageous work of the observers of UNOMIL. Their role is vital to the success of the Abuja Agreement. When I was in Monrovia, I stressed to UNOMIL officers that, in addition to monitoring the disengagement and disarmament of the combatants and assisting in their demobilization, we expect UNOMIL to follow through urgently on its other responsibilities, including investigating and reporting to the Secretary-General on human rights abuses, on any major violations of international humanitarian law and on humanitarian assistance activities. We have noted with some concern the criticism from the non-governmental organization community that UNOMIL is failing to meet these responsibilities. We have no doubt that it is a tough assignment. I told the Council of State that no party should hinder UNOMIL's important tasks.

We are studying the Secretary-General's recommendation that the UNOMIL mandate should be extended for a period of four months, until 31 May, with an interim report by the end of March. We believe that it is very important for the Council to continue to review the situation, and to continue to assess the progress of disarmament and demobilization, and of the preparations for elections, which are scheduled for August under the Abuja Agreement.

There is a simplistic way of looking at Liberia: that it is a land of chaos. I do not subscribe to that view. It is true that Monrovia is a devastated city, yet I witnessed a daily life on the streets that embodies a discipline and hope that the leaders of the country must nurture and live up to.

I delivered a blunt message to the Liberian leadership in Monrovia: the era of the child soldier in Liberia must come to an end immediately. It is an outrage by any standard of civilization that children under the age of 15, numbering between 4,000 and 6,000, are toting automatic weapons, slaughtering innocent civilians and ignoring the rule of law. They have no identity other than through the weapon they carry. We believe that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) can play a key role in rehabilitating these abused children, and I pressed that point during my discussions in Monrovia. The United States stands ready to assist UNICEF and the people of Liberia in order to save these children.

Many United Nations relief agencies are actively assisting the people of Liberia. I visited with many of their administrators. We can all be proud of their contribution in the face of adversity. But the international community needs to go one step further and consider how demobilized soldiers and other citizens can be put back to work rebuilding their country's infrastructure which, to put it bluntly, is trashed. The international community should have ready the technical assistance and other resources to help rehabilitate Liberia through technical and financial assistance for doable, targeted public works projects.

Implementing the Abuja Agreement is Liberia's best chance to achieve peace and justice. The violence must end, and the hatred must subside. Liberia's leaders must find the political will, and its people the political courage, to succeed in building a new, peaceful and prosperous Liberia.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): First of all, I welcome this opportunity to have an open debate on the situation in Liberia in general and on the role of the United Nations there. We feel that the report of the Secretary-General is a solid basis for this debate, and we are grateful for that report. A debate of this kind can give valuable direction for our further discussions in the Security Council, and we support any measures, such as this, which increase transparency.

Germany is extremely concerned at the lack of progress in the implementation of the Abuja Peace agreement. The parties in Liberia have fallen several months behind schedule in meeting their obligations, a development which is starting to affect seriously the entire peace process in the country. We are particularly concerned at the recent outbreak of fighting between soldiers of General Roosevelt Johnson's wing of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J) and Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops, which is a severe setback to efforts undertaken by the international community to mediate in the Liberian conflict

We welcome the fact, however, that the factions represented in the State Council seem determined to adhere to the Abuja peace Agreement, and we urge them to exert control over their military forces so that they observe the cease-fire and in order to bring about the disengagement of troops, which are focal points of the peace plan and an important element for progress towards security and confidence-building in the country.

In this context, we would like to make it very clear that the cessation of hostilities between the warring factions and the restoration of security in Liberia is essential to any measures of reconstruction and development that the international community might consider to help Liberia and its people overcome the devastating consequences of the civil war. We welcome the statement by the Foreign Minister of Liberia that we have just heard to the effect that the civil war is practically over.

Germany would like to emphasize the important and useful role that ECOMOG has been playing in Liberia, and thanks the troop-contributing countries for their commitment in Liberia. The wider deployment of ECOMOG to several other regions of the country will be an important stabilizing factor for the country as a whole, despite any initial difficulties that may arise, as in the case of Tubmanburg.

The work of ECOMOG in Liberia is an important example of a successful African peace-keeping mission in which African countries have assumed a great share of responsibility for the re-establishment of peace and stability in one of the countries of their continent, and thus for the stabilization of the region as a whole. Furthermore, the cooperation between ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) demonstrates that cooperation and a division of labour between the United Nations and regional organizations is a feasible model. In this context, Germany supports the initiatives by the Secretary-General to develop coordination and cooperation with regional organizations.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African States can play an important role in conflict resolution in Africa. Germany therefore also welcomes and supports the continuing efforts of the OAU and the African States to strengthen their capacity with regard to preventive diplomacy, conflict management and peace-keeping.

Despite the difficulties we are presently witnessing in the Liberian peace process, and of which we have just heard a pertinent and vivid assessment by the representative of the United States, the German Government believes that the parties in the State Council remain committed to a timely implementation of the Abuja peace plan. We therefore support the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for another four months.

However, during this period, the political will of the parties to achieve tangible progress, and practical evidence of that progress, will have to be monitored very carefully. If there is no visible progress soon with regard to maintaining the cease-fire, the disengagement of troops and disarmament, we would have difficulties in supporting a further extension of UNOMIL's mandate.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): We wish to welcome the statement just made by the Liberian Foreign Minister.

There has been fighting in Liberia on and off for six years already, since the outbreak of its civil war in 1989. This war in Western Africa has caused severe damage to the economy of Liberia, killed over 100,000 people and reduced another 700,000 to the condition of refugees. It is also posing a threat to peace and stability in neighbouring countries and the region as a whole.

In recent years, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made tremendous efforts to end the fighting in Liberia. Those States have sent peace-keeping forces to Liberia, in accordance with Chapter VIII, despite their own economic difficulties. Heads of State or Government of the countries concerned in the region have also met on many occasions to offer good offices and mediation, with a view to seeking a proper solution to the Liberian question. The United Nations has also made unremitting efforts to this end.

The dawn of peace once came to Liberia. Recently, however, the situation in Liberia has deteriorated again, as shown by the casualties suffered by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the grimmer humanitarian situation and continued difficulties in the comprehensive implementation of the Abuja Agreement. We are deeply concerned and disturbed by these developments.

The Liberian crisis is now at a critical moment. The international community and the countries concerned are doing their best for a renewed cease-fire among various parties in Liberia. Facts have proved that only when the parties concerned truly give up war and persist in

peaceful negotiations can there be a momentum of peace for turning swords into ploughshares. Therefore, we strongly urge the Liberian parties to cooperate with the United Nations and ECOWAS, strictly implement the Agreement already reached and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and take effective measures to complete at an early date the disarmament and demobilization of combatants so as to create conditions for the final realization of national reconciliation. The international community should also take concrete actions to support the efforts of ECOWAS and give full play to its role in this process.

Africa, with its rich resources and industrious people, is an important force in the international arena. African peoples, who have suffered greatly from conflicts and war, are now working hard to create a peaceful environment, rebuild their homelands and develop their national economies. The Chinese Government has all along held that world peace and development cannot be achieved without Africa's participation. A stable and developing Africa is conducive to world peace and prosperity. Therefore, we sincerely hope that African peoples will strengthen unity and cooperation, overcome difficulties and, with the help of the international community and through their own efforts, resolve various disputes at an early date, thus embarking on the road to national unity and economic development. We believe that with the joint efforts of the international community and African countries, a solution will ultimately be found to the Liberian conflict. China will work together with the international community to achieve this objective.

Mr. Casardi (Italy): Just a few months ago — on 10 November 1995 — the Security Council met to adopt a resolution that recognized the new situation created in Liberia following the Abuja peace Agreement. The resolution pointed out the appreciable progress the Liberian parties had recently made towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict, including the re-establishment of a cease-fire and an agreement on a timetable for the implementation of the peace process, from cease-fire to election.

As we know, the Secretary-General's latest report presents us with a very gloomy and disturbing picture of the peace process. I must admit that one may feel discouraged by its contents: recently there have been major violations of the cease-fire, which have taken a tragic toll on the African soldiers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). These developments, in turn, have prevented the complete deployment of both ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and therefore substantially delayed the critical process of disarmament and demobilization in general terms. We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep condolences to the families and Governments of the soldiers that have lost their lives.

Despite these serious setbacks and the delays in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement of August 1995, we share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the United Nations and the international community must remain committed to the Liberian peace process. In spite of all the negative circumstances in the country, there is still an adequate degree of commitment to attaining peace.

At this particular stage, the complete cooperation of the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Council of State with both ECOMOG and UNOMIL is of paramount importance. Together, they can ensure that the Liberian factions fulfil their obligations and enable the start of an effective disengagement of forces, which in turn will allow the process of disarmament and demobilization to begin.

A few months ago, a donor conference was held in New York. We understand that the availability of adequate financial resources for the peace process are at this moment critical. As the Secretary-General correctly points out, however, such support will also depend on the establishment throughout the country of a safe and secure environment.

The international donor community is nevertheless strongly committed to helping the Liberian people in the critical field of humanitarian assistance. The European Union, both directly and through the bilateral aid of some of its member States, is among the major providers of relief assistance to the country.

We are convinced that steady progress in the peace process will greatly improve the capacity of the donor community to commit itself to the search for peace and stability in Liberia, a goal that can be reached only if the parties in the country show that they are truly committed to this objective. We are ready to verify in the next few months whether it can be fulfilled.

Mr. Nkgowe (Botswana): The "Fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia" (S/1996/47) affords us an

opportunity to consider such a report in a formal meeting of the Security Council. This is a positive response to the wishes of the Member States to bring about transparency in the work and decision-making process of the United Nations. It is a matter of particular significance to my delegation that it is the situation in Liberia, one of the oldest conflicts in Africa, that is being discussed under this arrangement. It is our hope that today's meeting will focus the attention of the international community on the Liberian tragedy and the need to find an urgent solution to it.

The efforts of the Chairman of the Council of State, Mr. Wilton Sankawulo, and the Vice-Chairmen of the Council in explaining the peace process to the combatants, with a view to preparing them for disarmament and demobilization, are commendable. There is no doubt that the peace process will endure and remain sustainable only if the people who actually have control over the instruments of war at their command understand the need to disarm and demobilize. All the members of the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) should make concerted efforts to contribute to this noble task by ensuring that those loyal to them receive the same message. The provision of assistance to ex-combatants should be improved and make attractive their reintegration into civilian life. The Liberian political leaders and parties should do all in their power to create a climate conducive to the delivery of such assistance. The international community needs to be assured that this assistance will be used for the purpose for which it is intended. The creation of conditions of security and stability in the country is indispensable to inspiring confidence in this regard.

The report (S/1995/1042) of the Secretary-General dated 18 December 1995 informed the Council that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) had decided to deploy troops in the most critical areas of Liberia in an effort to maintain the momentum of the peace process. This is a commendable task by ECOMOG, given the risks involved in such an endeavour. The tragic events of 28 December 1995, regrettable as they are, highlighted the difficulties and realities with which ECOMOG has to contend. We condemn the senseless attack on ECOMOG and deeply regret the loss of human life. The Security Council should call upon all factions to respect the cease-fire and direct their energies to the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia. It is true that ECOMOG took a risk

> "in deploying its troops without the strength and resources necessary to carry out its mandate". *(S/1996/47, para. 5)*

But is it not equally true that the situation could have deteriorated further had ECOMOG done nothing?

In paragraph 17, the report of the Secretary-General speaks of a most disturbing development in the implementation of the Abuja Peace Agreement. The report indicates not only that the implementation of the Agreement is behind schedule, but that the whole peace process is in serious danger of being completely derailed. The international community should not allow this situation to continue irreversibly. The solution to this dangerous development is known to the international community: ECOMOG urgently needs financial and logistic support. A lot has already been said about ECOMOG's lack of financial and logistic resources. It is most regrettable, therefore, that five months after the signing of the Abuja Peace Agreement ECOMOG has not yet been provided with the necessary resources.

It is time the international community lived up to its responsibilities in the maintenance of peace and security. It should demonstrate its resolve and determination to search for solutions to all conflict situations in the world in equal measure and on the basis that peace restored anywhere is peace maintained everywhere. Otherwise, our common humanity and the common destiny of mankind would be in doubt. In other words, conflict situations in Africa should be treated like conflict situations elsewhere, and Liberia is a test-case. Equally, the relationship between the United Nations and regional and subregional arrangements in peace-keeping operations should be reviewed so that the former could assist in the peace-keeping missions of regional organizations.

The international community should not lose sight of the crucial role that the holding of legislative and presidential elections could play in establishing a legitimate and representative Government which could contribute to the sustenance of peace and stability in that country. In this respect, we welcome the Secretary-General's intention, stated in paragraph 10 of his report, to send a technical mission to Liberia to consult with the LNTG, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ECOWAS on matters related to the electoral process. We look forward to his report and recommendations.

There is general consensus that the people involved in any given conflict situation bear the ultimate responsibility for the restoration of peace and national reconciliation. The Security Council cannot, however, ignore attempts by a few armed men to frustrate the will of the majority. It is important that the international

community should assist the people of Liberia in whatever way possible to liberate themselves from the clutches of these few armed men and not blame them for, or abandon them in, their captivity.

Botswana supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a period of four months, until 31 May 1996. It is our hope that during this period substantial progress will be made in the implementation of the peace process and that elections will be held as scheduled. And it is also our hope that the international community will be generous in rendering assistance to ECOMOG, which shoulders the greater responsibility in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

Mr. Awaad (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Egyptian delegation would like at the outset to extend its thanks to you, Sir, for convening this meeting, which establishes a very good precedent, one that will definitely contribute to further transparency in the work of the Security Council.

The delegation of Egypt also welcomes both the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and his statement.

We should like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General as well as for his fifteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). We have carefully studied the report and would like to express our grave concern regarding the delay in implementing the provisions of the Abuja Agreement signed last August. This jeopardizes the possibility of holding presidential and legislative elections on 20 August 1996, as was agreed.

We also regret the latest attacks on ECOMOG in the Tubmanburg region. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims — those who were killed carrying out their duties in maintaining peace on the territory of Liberia.

The peace process in Liberia is at a critical juncture. It requires the full support of all the parties in Liberia to overcome the latest setback to implementation of the provisions of the peace Agreement within the agreed schedule.

Probably the most important step would be to enable the approximately 60,000 soldiers who will be demobilized, from the various factions, to be reintegrated into civilian life and to find them appropriate job opportunities. In our opinion, this requires the international community to attach special importance to rehabilitation projects and the reconstruction of State facilities in order to provide further job opportunities. This, in turn, requires creating a stable and safe environment through full disarmament of the factions and pressure to bear on all parties to abide by the schedule to be agreed upon in order to engage troops in disarmament.

Since its eruption in 1989, the civil war in Liberia has led to great human suffering, with 150,000 victims and the displacement of more than half the country's population. That places a great moral and humanitarian responsibility on the international community to help end the Liberian people's plight, by giving all possible assistance to the governing Council and the new Government as soon as the elections are over.

It is worth mentioning that providing protection and security for UNOMIL, as well as for all the international relief organizations, is an important responsibility that all the Liberian factions should discharge.

The experience of ECOWAS in Liberia is a very good model for the role that regional and non-regional organizations may play in containing and settling conflicts. This experience has demonstrated now important it is that the United Nations, being the "mother" organization, should provide support for these organizations, most of which lack technical and financial resources, as well as equipment, to make regional endeavours a success. Thus the United Nations is directly responsible for making the experience of ECOMOG in Liberia a success, and should learn from this for the future.

The delegation of Egypt would like to confirm that it is important that all countries, particularly Liberia's neighbours, respect the arms embargo imposed by Security Council resolution 788 (1992) and faithfully cooperate with the Committee established to monitor the resolution's implementation. The spread of weapons in Liberia today is the major threat to Liberia's stability and to the stability of countries throughout the region. What Liberia needs today is not more weapons, but humanitarian, technical and financial assistance, so that normality may be restored to the country.

We welcome and support the efforts of the Secretariat, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme, to extend assistance to Liberia

so that the country may prepare for elections to take place next August, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement.

The Egyptian delegation supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 31 May 1996. We hope that the progress report due to be submitted by the Secretary-General by the end of March 1996 will include positive developments, confirming that the Liberian factions will take positive, serious steps to implement the Abuja Agreement.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): The French delegation has carefully studied the fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). This document, for which we would like to thank our Secretary-General, prompts us to make the following comments.

The Security Council will recall that Liberia went through a very difficult time in 1995, which led us to consider the complete withdrawal of the United Nations from that country. The efforts made by the countries in the region, particularly by the Head of State of Ghana, Mr. Rawlings, and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nyakyi, made it possible to persuade the factions to sign a new peace Agreement in Abuja on 19 August 1995. That Agreement, which brought into force a cease-fire and effectively established the Council of State, included a tight timetable to bring the Liberians to the polling booths a year after it was signed.

From the outset, it was apparent that this timetable would be very difficult to keep to; that was the view of the Secretary-General himself. The French delegation clearly hopes that the peace process will be concluded as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, we are not very surprised at the recent delays. The disarmament and demobilization process is at the very heart of all peace agreements. The distrust between the factions after five years of civil war explains why, as was equally true in Namibia, Mozambique and El Salvador, difficulties are encountered in carrying out these particular tasks. We note, however, that some progress has been achieved. Assembly sites are being identified, and the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) are assured, for the time being, of the full cooperation of the Council of State, which I repeat, was established only a few months ago.

Technical delays in the implementation of the peace process are therefore understandable. On the other hand, the entrenched reluctance of certain factions to respect the agreements which they have entered into is unpardonable. We have noted, as have other delegations, that the wing of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy led by Mr. Johnson has been responsible for many armed attacks against troops of the African force. We particularly deplore the serious incident on 28 December 1995 in Tubmanburg, which cost the lives of at least 16 men of the ECOMOG force, to whose memory we pay tribute. The French delegation would like to recall, in this connection, that the involvement of the United Nations in Liberia, where approximately 11 peace agreements have already been signed, is conditional upon the good will of the factions to put an end to the war and to restore democracy in that country. We cannot accept extortion by warlords who fear that the return of peace may deprive them of the booty which they appropriated, to the detriment of the civilian population. We find it equally inadmissible that obstacles are still being placed in the way of humanitarian convoys which were freely criss-crossing the country to bring assistance to populations cut off from the outside world for more than three years.

The French delegation is prepared to support the recommendations of the Secretary-General on extending UNOMIL's mandate for an additional period of four months. Nevertheless, we do not intend to leave the factions free for 120 days to apply or not to apply the Agreements signed at Abuja. We therefore hope that the draft resolution soon to be adopted by the Security Council on UNOMIL will contain language allowing the Council to re-examine the situation in Liberia within 60 days, particularly with respect to the implementation by the factions of commitments undertaken in the fields of disarmament and demobilization. Thus the Council will be enabled to review its analysis of the situation if the events make this necessary.

In conclusion, the French Government would like to reiterate that France will continue to provide assistance to Liberia so that that country may rapidly return to the road to progress and democracy. The French Secretary of State with responsibility for humanitarian affairs visited Liberia last month to evaluate the assistance which we could provide to assist the peace process. The French delegation announced during the Conference on Assistance to Liberia that France would soon make a considerable effort. The French Government has decided to provide approximately F15 million in assistance to Liberia; F6 million will be devoted to humanitarian operations and F4 million will be used to promote the

reintegration of populations in the Maryland region. France will also provide aid of F1.5 million to Guinea, which has a battalion within ECOMOG. A payment of F3.5 million to the Special Trust Fund of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace in Liberia will be made shortly.

France hopes that the Liberians, who have committed themselves to restoring peace to their country, will continue to do everything they can to encourage the international community to continue to help them. Aid can never be provided indefinitely. It is therefore also necessary that Liberians of good will seize the opportunity offered to them to close what is, unfortunately, one of the most dismal pages of their national history.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his fifteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which contains his observations on the peace process in that country and his recommendations on a possible extension of UNOMIL's mandate.

We also wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and thank him for taking part in the work at the Security Council today.

In September last year, my delegation, like the rest of this Council, welcomed the fact that following the conclusion of the Abuja Agreement, the leaders of the three Liberian factions had assumed their positions in the Transitional Government. At that time, we welcomed the fact that a cease-fire had been restored and the process of separation of forces had begun.

We also believed at that time that the establishment of the Transitional Government, known as the Council of State, as part of a new agreement aimed at ending the civil war — which had persisted for six years, had taken tens of thousands of lives, had internally displaced many persons and had created refugee flows to neighbouring countries — was an encouraging development that allayed our concerns about the Liberian factions' lack of determination to honour their commitments.

But recent events in Liberia — the armed incidents in the town of Tubmanburg against contingents of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the fighting in the area of Kle, the looting in the city of Robertsport and other parts of the country by forces of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) — make us doubt the political will of the parties to meet the commitments set out in the Abuja Agreement.

These new developments, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, threaten the peace process in Liberia. To be sure, the establishment of the Council of State marked a new level of progress towards putting an end to the war. But many of the past differences between the parties, including the difficult elements of disarmament and demobilization have not yet been resolved.

Although the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy are nominally controlled by their leaders, there are sub-factions that could resume the struggle; moreover, new factions could appear on the scene and demand that the Agreement be revised or that they be included in the process.

Even if the country were to be disarmed and restored to peace, the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for August this year would still pose a serious challenge. There remains the danger that any faction dissatisfied with the preparations, with the process or with the results of the elections could decide to take up arms once again. We believe that even with a democratically elected government in place, Liberia will continue to face enormous obstacles, since its infrastructure has been largely destroyed, tens of thousands have died in the conflict, and hundreds of thousands have left the country.

Nevertheless, my delegation considers that the successful implementation of the Abuja Agreement is essential for the future of Liberia. This may be the last chance for the country to attain lasting peace. Resumption of the struggle would only bring about condemnation by the international community, which could limit or withhold its support for the peace process. It is therefore important for the faction leaders to show that they are fully determined to support the process. As the Secretary-General has indicated, the factions cannot expect the Economic Community of West African States and the international community to support the peace process in Liberia indefinitely, in the absence of clear political will on their part to respect and comply with the commitments they have undertaken.

Once again, and with reference to the 28 December 1995 armed incident in the town of Tubmanburg, we believe that the situation with regard to

ECOMOG and to the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) requires no further clarification. ECOMOG and UNOMIL have worked together to facilitate the implementation of the military aspects of the Cotonou Agreement and are now working to implement the Abuja Agreement and to bring about the most important aspects of disarmament and demobilization. In other words, they are factors in the peace process in Liberia. The December incident, caused by mistrust between the two wings of ULIMO, was unjustifiable, and certainly, as the report of the Secretary-General indicates, was a serious setback for the peace process and delayed the deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL forces, which still lack guarantees of safety for their personnel.

We believe that to improve the security situation in Liberia the factions must abide by the cease-fire, make clear progress in the separation of forces, withdraw from the checkpoints, permit the donors of humanitarian aid to go about their work freely, cooperate with ECOMOG and UNOMIL on disarmament and demobilization, and enable UNOMIL to enjoy total freedom of movement throughout Liberia in conformity with its mandate and with its status as agreed with the Transitional Government. We hope that the Liberian parties will show this willingness to fulfil their commitments.

My delegation considers that internal stabilization and progress in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement are the most important aspects of the peace process in Liberia. On that basis, we shall support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council should extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a further four months.

Let me conclude by thanking the Governments of Ghana and Nigeria for their important cooperation in the peace process, through their participation in ECOMOG.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My delegation appreciates the initiative of the President of the Council for this month, Sir John Weston, in arranging this orientation debate, and believes that this and future orientation debates in formal meetings of the Council will further enhance the Council's transparency and facilitate its democratization.

We are of the view that the issue at hand clearly warrants this type of open forum. Given the critical stage of the situation in Liberia, the continued attention of the international community is more necessary now than ever before. In this regard, my delegation commends the initiative and efforts of Ambassador Albright, who undertook an important mission to flashpoints in Africa, including Liberia. Her observations and sombre reflections should provide useful input for our debates.

My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for submitting his fifteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). In particular, we express our appreciation to the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Anthony Nyakyi, for their strenuous efforts to facilitate the peace process in Liberia.

The peace-keeping operation in Liberia is unique in the sense that, for the first time in Africa, the subregional organization, ECOWAS, has taken a primary role, while the United Nations has assisted and monitored the activities of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

In some ways, the Liberian operation, together with the ongoing collaboration between the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States in Georgia, can be regarded as a test case for the capability of countries in a given region and regional organizations to deal with their problems. The success of ECOMOG's involvement in close coordination with UNOMIL will set an example to be emulated elsewhere. In this regard, ECOMOG and UNOMIL deserve every encouragement and support from the international community.

The peace process, which began with the signing of the Abuja Agreement on 19 August 1995, is now at a critical juncture. Since late December, serious cease-fire violations have been committed by several Liberian factions. As a result of these renewed hostilities, many ECOMOG soldiers and innocent civilians have lost their lives. My delegation expresses its deep regret over these casualties and extends its sincere condolences to the troop contributing countries and to the families of those killed or wounded.

We are also very concerned at the further setback of the disarmament process caused by the Tubmanburg incident, which forced the withdrawal of peace-keepers from the area. This incident, however, must not be allowed to derail the peace process envisaged in the Abuja Agreement. In this connection, I should like to welcome the firm commitment to the Abuja Agreement reaffirmed by the Foreign Minister of Liberia through his statement this morning.

We strongly urge all factions, particularly ULIMO-J, to honour their commitments to the peace process and not to engage in any activities that may disrupt it.

The issue of disarmament and demobilization lies at the heart of the difficult situation in Liberia. We emphasize the importance of the faction leaders' role in ensuring the cooperation of their soldiers with ECOMOG and UNOMIL in the process of disarmament and demobilization. Without the successful disarmament and demobilization of the estimated 60,000 combatants, peace cannot prevail in the war-ravaged Liberian society.

My delegation is also of the view that the cooperation of the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) is essential for the success of the peace process in Liberia. In this context, the peace-keeping operation and humanitarian assistance in Liberia should enjoy full cooperation and coordination with the LNTG. We underline the LNTG's responsibility to ensure complete freedom of movement of those personnel in carrying out their work.

Despite the unfortunate aspects to which I have just alluded, there are some positive developments that have occurred during the last few months and that should not go unnoticed.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a senior electoral officer and notes with satisfaction that the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office has become fully operational in discharging its responsibility for the coordination of humanitarian assistance as well as the reintegration aspects of demobilization.

We are also pleased that the LNTG and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have concluded an agreement establishing the framework for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees, and hope that the voluntary return of refugees currently taking place in northern Liberia represents a growing trend.

Echoing the Secretary-General's notion, contained in the Agenda for Development, that development is a prerequisite for peace, we welcome the plan to convene a special consultation meeting of the LNTG and its international partners in March 1996 to address Liberia's recovery and reconstruction process.

As mentioned in the report, recent events in Liberia have caused serious concern and have regrettably delayed the implementation of the Abuja Agreement for more than two months. I believe that it is indeed time for all Liberian factions to renew their commitment to the peace process by adhering to the established timetable leading to elections seven months from now. Whether their country can become a land of liberty, peace and prosperity, as envisaged by their ancestors, is essentially in their hands.

This delegation is poignantly reminded of a recent article in *The New York Times* quoting General Charles Taylor, one of the faction leaders, in a conversation he reportedly had with Ambassador Albright in Monrovia last week regarding the seven-year-old Liberian civil war. He said:

"I started it and now I don't know how to stop it."

The answer to this fundamental question is plain and simple. All the factions concerned must abide by and implement the commitments they freely entered into in Abuja last summer.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): It is a great pleasure for my delegation to associate itself with previous speakers in expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his fifteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) of 23 January 1996.

My delegation should like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Liberia and to thank him for his insightful statement. We also wish to express our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Anthony Nyakyi, and to the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community's Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for their continued endeavours towards the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. We similarly commend the personnel of UNOMIL for their efforts in the restoration of peace, security and stability in Liberia.

The signing of the Abuja Agreement in August 1995 gave the people of Liberia and the international community a sense of optimism that the six-year civil war, which has had catastrophic consequences, both human and economic, would be nearing its end. We were further encouraged by the action of the Security Council in November 1995 in adopting resolution 1020 (1995),

which we were confident would provide the foundation for renewed international support for the peace process.

Unfortunately, however, my delegation's budding optimism has been tempered by the recent report of the Secretary-General, which, on the whole, portrays a declining political, military and humanitarian situation. We deeply regret the tragic conflict that broke out in Tubmanburg, resulting from deep-seated suspicions between some factions, and the ensuing casualties that were suffered by the personnel of ECOMOG and the civilian population. May I therefore take this opportunity, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, to extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the ECOMOG soldiers who died in the fulfilment of their peace-keeping duties as well as to the families of the innocent civilians. The profoundly detrimental implications of this incident on the peace process cannot be underestimated. We also note and are concerned that serious cease-fire violations and skirmishes have occurred in other regions.

These events not only have caused further delays in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement but are, in our view, a clear indication of the necessity to further encourage confidence-building measures between the factions. In this context, we call upon the Liberian leadership to demonstrate genuine political will to get the peace process back on track and to discard the logic of war in resolving its differences. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate that the international community cannot be expected to support the peace process in Liberia indefinitely in the absence of a clear determination on the part of the factions to abide by and implement the commitments they themselves have undertaken.

My delegation believes that a secure peace will continue to prove elusive without the implementation of the detailed disarmament and demobilization plan elaborated by UNOMIL and ECOMOG in consultation with the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG), the factions and the humanitarian community. We are, however, keenly aware of the interlinkages of the various aspects involved, as alluded to by the Secretary-General in paragraph 43 of his report, that the success of the demobilization process depends on the opportunities of the ex-combatants reintegrating into civilian life, while the success of the reintegration process requires a revitalized economy that can only be achieved within a safe and secure environment.

Such an environment can be attained only through a successful process of disarmament. To this end, it is imperative that the international community step up its efforts, without delay, in providing the necessary resources in order to avert the potential spread of this conflict. We stress the need in this instance to focus on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking as measures to deter further outbreaks of conflict such as occurred in Tubmanburg.

We are encouraged that the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office is now fully operational, is engaged in the process of providing humanitarian assistance and is designing programmes and activities that will lead to the reintegration of the demobilized. We believe, therefore, that it is paramount that efforts be undertaken in a meaningful manner to address adequately the economic deprivations that so often provide the catalyst for resorting to violence.

It is in this connection that we would like to echo the Secretary-General's call to the LNTG to provide its full support and enlist the support of the Liberian factions to assist in this critical endeavour.

While the recent record in Liberia has provided ample opportunity for disappointment, we can nevertheless foresee the possibility of hope on the horizon. Our feeling of encouragement emanates from several elements.

Firstly, we note the recent steps taken by the Secretary-General to prepare for the legislative and presidential elections that are scheduled to take place before the end of August 1996, as provided for in the Abuja Agreement.

Secondly, we observe that, on 3 January 1996, the LNTG and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees concluded an agreement establishing a framework for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees.

Thirdly, continued cooperation prevails between UNOMIL and the LNTG and with other United Nations agencies and local and international non-governmental organizations to facilitate support for the Liberian judicial system and human rights groups.

Fourthly, a coordinated effort on the part of the international community is beginning to take place to address reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.

These, in our opinion, are an appropriate framework and conducive to moving the peace process forward.

It is against this backdrop, and after careful consideration and analysis, that my delegation fully concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a period of four months, until 31 May 1996.

As I have explained, we, along with the rest of the Council, are disappointed and frustrated by the continued violations of the cease-fire agreement and the slow progress made in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. These serious considerations, however, should not overshadow the progress that has been made. Moreover, a withdrawal at this point would send the wrong signal to the parties about the international community's resolve in this matter, and would certainly undermine confidence in ECOMOG. Given the enormous potential that exists to further the peace process, we feel that this is no time to set the unsavoury precedent of withdrawing support when it is needed most.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): I thank the Secretary-General for the report concerning the situation in Liberia contained in the document S/1996/147.

Let me also express my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for initiating this orientation meeting on Liberia, which is providing a useful opportunity to exchange views on the subject and to acquire new information. We are glad to see His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Liberia among us, and we welcome his determination to succeed in the rapid achievement of peace in his country. We are also grateful to Ambassador Albright for her reflections on her visit to Liberia and on the most recent developments in the conflict area.

It is with great interest that we have acquainted ourselves with the report before us, especially since it is focused on the period in which the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was fulfilling its adjusted mandate in conformity with Security Council resolution 1020 (1995) of 10 November 1995.

This resolution also serves as a valid point of reference in our debate today, since in its preambular part the Security Council notes some positive trends in the development of the situation, such as the progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Liberia and the determination of the parties involved to maintain peace and stability within the State.

Unfortunately, the fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on UNOMIL does not confirm that those processes have been lasting ones. Our delegation remains particularly concerned by breaches of the cease-fire agreement: the Tubmanburg incident, as a result of which 16 Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) members lost their lives, is a most serious violation of the Abuja Agreement of 19 August 1995. It is regrettable that it has been followed by other cease-fire violations and by other assaults on ECOMOG centres and personnel.

It is evident that the Tubmanburg event contributed to an escalation of tensions throughout the country: it undermined confidence between the political and the armed groups, and by increasing the military threat caused significant delay in the planned deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL. It also adversely affected the humanitarian situation for the population. As a result of the incident, the confidence of the international community in the lasting character and momentum of the peace process in Liberia has been seriously weakened.

The Polish delegation welcomes the activities undertaken by the Liberian National Transitional Government, the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia to defuse the incident and to ensure the prompt release of the civilians and ECOMOG soldiers who have been detained. We express our sincere hope that these activities will alleviate the situation in the region, and will have a positive effect on the overall situation in Liberia.

We would also like to refer to those parts of the report which allow us some hope that the political process in Liberia will go forward despite the delays. Specifically, we attach great importance to the existing political dialogue. The importance of that dialogue can hardly be overestimated.

Humanitarian assistance is being provided and it is expanding into areas that have been inaccessible so far. We wish to underline the role of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office in this respect.

The voluntary repatriation of refugees is a significant factor in providing fresh impetus for the renewed cultivation of abandoned land.

We also welcome the latest phase of consultations concerning the programme of disarmament and demobilization of combatants.

Let me state clearly that the present moment appears crucial for the future of the peace process in Liberia. The major responsibility for developments in the country lies with the political parties, and a successful defusing of the crisis that has arisen after the Tubmanburg incident and the further implementation of the Abuja agreement depend, ultimately, on their political will. Similarly, we can say that the fate of their country is contingent upon their degree of maturity and responsibility.

I should also like to stress the importance of continued action by regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Organization of African Unity, both of which are already deeply involved in the peace process in Liberia.

Let me also emphasize the fact that the region's ability to fulfil its important mission in the conflict area depends also on material and logistic support that is to be provided by the international community. We should spare no effort to enhance the peace process in Liberia.

We should also rest secure in the conviction that, thanks to the sincere will of the warring parties, the international community's involvement and contribution will not be in vain.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): As this is my first statement at a formal meeting of the Security Council this January, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of your duties as President of the Council for this month.

I express also my gratitude to all my colleagues for their kind words addressed to the Russian delegation concerning our tenure of the presidency of the Security Council last month.

The Russian delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his detailed report on Liberia. We welcome the presence among us of the Foreign Minister of Liberia and welcome also the important speech he delivered.

Unfortunately, the information coming out of Liberia, including the information we have heard today, tells of serious hold-ups in the peace process, and this is cause for serious concern. There has been no real progress in the processes of separation of forces, disarmament and demobilization of combatants. Not only that — as the Secretary-General points out in his report — there are some armed groupings trying to re-establish control over the self-same points from which their forces had previously been withdrawn.

We firmly condemn the armed attacks that have resulted in so many casualties among the peace-keeping personnel of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). We express our deep condolences to their families.

Events in the Tubmanburg area have acutely worsened the situation in Liberia and halted the further deployment of ECOMOG divisions and United Nations military observers, thus jeopardizing the peace process as a whole. We cannot accept the Liberian factions' attempts to justify their attacks on the peace-keepers and the absence of progress towards a political settlement by alleging that the world community has not provided them with sufficient funds to secure the peace process. The international community is actively working for peace in Liberia, as can be seen in the joint actions of ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, as well as in the efforts of many individual States, the most recent example of which was the visit to the region by the Permanent Representative of the United States, Ambassador Albright.

However, it is clear that lasting peace, stability and national reconciliation cannot be imported from the exterior. The key to success in the peace process in Liberia is in the hands of the Liberians themselves. We would venture to hope that their current leaders have sufficient political will and wisdom to be able, through joint efforts, to get their country out of this vicious circle of violence and bloodshed.

The task of the international community, as we see it, is to give them all possible assistance in this regard. The Russian Federation calls upon all Liberian parties to cooperate fully with ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) in the performance of their duties and to fulfil the obligations they voluntarily accepted under the Abuja Agreement.

The Russian delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNOMIL's mandate be extended for four months. We expect that by the end of March the Secretary-General will have presented for the Security Council's consideration an interim report on developments in the process, including an analysis of

matters connected with preparations for the elections in Liberia, scheduled for August of this year.

The Liberian parties should understand clearly that the patience of the international community is not boundless and that the Security Council cannot go on endlessly extending the mandate and authority of UNOMIL. Further active support by the international community for the peace process in Liberia will depend to a decisive degree on whether the Liberian parties are actually able to demonstrate the political will to normalize the situation in the country and to fulfil faithfully the provisions of the Abuja Agreement.

It is important to all of us that a political settlement in Liberia should soon be crowned with complete success. We believe that the experience gained in that country of practical interaction between the United Nations, the OAU and ECOWAS can be usefully applied to other peace-keeping operations and can constitute an important contribution to the development of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Mano Queta (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Guinea-Bissau would like, through you, Mr. President, to congratulate the Secretary-General on his commitment to the cause of Africa and his activities in that connection, particularly concerning Liberia. We wish to pay a heartfelt tribute to all the Heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States for their dedication to and support for the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) since it was created with a view to facilitating the process of restoring peace and achieving national reconciliation in Liberia.

We take this opportunity to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and to assure him of Guinea-Bissau's fellowship and its willingness to work for peace and national reconciliation his friendly and brotherly country. We thank him for the information he has provided us concerning the current situation in Liberia.

Guinea-Bissau, a country of the same subregion, is deeply concerned by the slow implementation of the peace process in that brotherly country. My country has always followed with special interest the development of the situation, and it welcomed the signing of the Abuja Agreement and the establishment of the Council of State.

We wish to reiterate our satisfaction at and support for the memorandum of understanding signed on 30 November 1995, and we urge the parties to the conflict to continue along the path of peace and national reconciliation, to work for the reconstruction of the country and to refrain from any action that could undermine respect for the terms of the cease-fire established under the Abuja Agreement.

However, we regret the incidents that took place in Tubmanburg on 28 December, and we deplore the deaths of several members of ECOMOG and of innocent civilians.

Guinea-Bissau is firmly convinced that the political will of all the parties concerned is a *sine qua non* for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. None the less, we also consider that the firm and continued support of the international community is necessary in order to speed up the peace process. This would alleviate the suffering of the population, which has already gone on for too long.

In this context, we appeal urgently to the international community to keep the promise it made at the Conference on Assistance to Liberia, held on 27 October 1995 here in New York.

The problem of refugees and displaced persons is of crucial importance and deserves the special attention of the international community. As the Council knows, Guinea-Bissau has already taken in a great many of them, which has repercussions on its fragile economic situation. There should be a minimal guarantee of security and stability so that they can voluntarily and spontaneously return.

In this connection, we wish to pay a tribute to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to the non-governmental organizations for their activities on the ground, at times in extremely difficult conditions, and to reiterate our full support for them.

In conclusion, we would like to express our unreserved support for the proposals made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 8 of his report, relating to the elections envisaged under the Abuja Agreement, and in paragraph 45, concerning the extension of the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for a period of four months. We also wish to reaffirm our desire to see the parties to the conflict

resolve their differences through constructive dialogue that could contribute to national reconciliation.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having put on the Council's agenda the item on the situation in Liberia, thus giving us the opportunity to hold this debate, open to all the States Members of the United Nations. Many thanks.

We are grateful for the very thorough report of the Secretary-General, which contains a very interesting paragraph on the efforts of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to cooperate in the economic and social development of Liberia. Without such cooperation, any political agreement would have a very flimsy foundation.

I am also grateful for the presence here of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia.

This being the first time we have made a formal statement on the activities of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), I wish to emphasize the enormous importance we attach to the peace process and to reconstruction in Liberia. This national and regional effort supported by the United Nations has, in general, shown positive results, and, until the occurrence of the recent events on which I shall comment later, it symbolized the way in which complementary regional, national and international efforts can be coordinated to bring peace and stability to a country.

In fact, and in the first place, the parties to the conflict, after many disagreements, have concluded a series of agreements, beginning with Yamoussoukro and Cotonou proceeding to the Abuja Agreement of last year, thus setting the course of a peace process.

Secondly, the African region, through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the political follow-up of the situation by friendly, concerned countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, among others, has made a direct commitment to the peace aspirations of the people of Liberia.

Thirdly and finally, the international community, through UNOMIL, humanitarian cooperation, support for the needs of economic and social development and the monitoring of human rights and the electoral process, *inter alia*, is strengthening national and regional efforts. In this context, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ambassador Nyakyi, has been of fundamental importance.

Thus, from the standpoint of the United Nations, this three-pronged design is the best one for the Organization's intervention in areas of conflict. However, as always and as has been made clear by the analysis of the situation we have heard this morning reality is much more complex than the design. However, we must point out that, considering the situation that obtained in the country in the recent past, the peace process was making relatively good progress, even with the delays and setbacks that we all acknowledge, towards the elections to be held in August 1996.

This is why, in addition to the hopes raised by the circumstances I have mentioned, we must express immense regret at the acts of violence that have occurred since 28 December and the shadow of mistrust they have cast. In the report we are considering today, the Secretary-General presents a somewhat chilling account of the suffering of the civilian population in Liberia, and this gives rise to our deepest concern. This deplorable resurgence of violence, together with the delay in disarmament and demobilization, is in no way in keeping with the expectations aroused by the signing of the Abuja Agreement, and it naturally casts doubt on the credibility of its signatories.

It is essential that the relatively calm situation achieved before these violations of the cease-fire be restored. But it is obvious that without displays of genuine political will to carry out successfully the peace process in Liberia, the international community would be less enthusiastic about maintaining support for the activities required to do so.

We especially regret the suffering of the civilian population, in particular the loss of human life, the forced displacement of citizens and the unfortunate recurrence, in a United Nations peace-keeping operation, of the use of human shields, as a result of the fighting in Tubmanburg and Kle. In this context, we wish to highlight the efforts that were under way before the latest outbreak of violence to facilitate the return of the 750,000 Liberian refugees.

We must pay special tribute to the forces of ECOMOG and express our solidarity with it and our condolences for those recently killed and wounded. It is essential for ECOMOG to have a status-of-forces

agreement that strengthens its security so that its deployment may be completed as soon as possible.

In view of all these considerations, we wish to support the Secretary-General's proposal and declare ourselves in favour of a new extension of UNOMIL, and, in particular, we agree with the final observations made by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 41 to 45 of his report.

We believe that one last effort by the United Nations is required to consolidate the wide-ranging advances that have been made towards peace and make it possible for all these efforts to reach the desired conclusion.

As we can all see, we are at a decisive point in this process. With a view to the holding of the legislative and presidential elections on 20 August next, we must maintain support for UNOMIL and strengthen the hope shared by all that peace among Liberians, with the support of the region and the international community, will be possible.

In conclusion, we appeal to the leaders of the various factions to place the interests of the human beings, families and civilian communities of Liberia above their own political, personal, group or factional interests — legitimate though they may seem — because ultimately, as I believe all of us in this Chamber agree, only Liberia can bring peace to Liberia.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United Kingdom.

My delegation joins others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). There are some positive aspects to the Secretary-General's report, particularly the Transitional Government's declaration on the right of refugees to return in safety; refugee return is an important step towards normalization. But on the whole, the report makes sombre reading, and its contents are made more vivid for us by what we have heard this morning of Ambassador Albright's first-hand impressions.

We share the Secretary-General's concern about cease-fire violations, particularly the serious incident of fighting in Tubmanburg at the end of last month. My delegation deeply regrets the loss of life among the forces of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). We are outraged that peace-keeping forces should be subjected to attack and we join the Secretary-General in extending condolences to the countries and families of those concerned. We believe that ECOMOG is right not to deploy further until the factions can provide concrete guarantees for the safety of their personnel.

The Secretary-General's report of human rights violations in Liberia is also deeply worrying. The use of civilians as human shields is totally unacceptable. My delegation would be grateful for any information from the Secretariat on the situation of civilians trapped between ECOMOG and ULIMO-J forces outside Kle.

It is the responsibility of the Council of State to ensure that the terms of the Abuja Agreement are adhered to. There is a danger that the Tubmanburg and similar incidents, as well as ULIMO-J inter-factional fighting, will cause the Abuja Agreement to unravel country-wide. In this respect, we agree with previous speakers that disarmament and demobilization procedures are crucial. We hope that UNOMIL and ECOMOG can start this process as soon as possible. The onus is on the Council of State and the leaders of all the factions to ensure that all parties cooperate.

My delegation recognizes that the Abuja timetable might well slip. In this context, we believe that an extension of UNOMIL's mandate to 31 May is necessary and agree with the Secretary-General's recommendations. But all in Liberia must understand that the continued commitment of the international community depends on the willingness of the factions to observe the cease-fire, disengage, disarm and demobilize; in other words, to make concrete progress towards peace.

My delegation would also draw the Council's attention to the scale of arrears built up in UNOMIL, as well as in peace-keeping more generally. If peace-keeping operations are to fulfil their mandates they must receive the necessary funding in full and on time.

With that, I resume my function as President of the Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Senegal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Permit me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for his work

last month. I also wish to thank the members of the Council for having kindly allowed me to speak at this meeting.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/1996/47, dated 23 January 1996, confirms the precariousness of the situation in Liberia. The Tubmanburg incident and its negative consequences for the security situation reveal all the difficulty and complexity of the situation on the ground. The events described by the Secretary-General in his report underscore the need for control of the situation in its military and security aspects so that the peace process in which the parties are freely engaged can have a real chance.

It is on the basis of this conviction that we that wish to seize the opportunity offered by this meeting of the Security Council to launch an appeal to the international community to supply the troops of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) with the necessary material and logistical means for their deployment throughout the entire country, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement of 19 August 1995.

We believe that the success of the important efforts and sacrifices agreed to in regional and international plans to restore peace to Liberia depends in large measure, at this crucial stage of the process, on the capacity of ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them.

My delegation welcomes the efforts made by the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, His Excellency Mr. Jerry Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana, as well as by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his Special Representative and the countries of the region, to restore calm and avoid escalation.

The Tubmanburg incident has also made acutely apparent the need for the full cooperation of the faction leaders in the implementation of the agreements freely entered into. In this regard, the signing of an agreement to clarify ECOMOG's status in Liberia could constitute a first step in this direction, as the Secretary-General emphasizes in his report.

In the current Liberian context, the presence of the international community, through ECOMOG and UNOMIL, constitutes an essential condition for bringing peace to Liberia and putting an end to the suffering of the Liberian people.

The Secretary-General's recommendation, contained in paragraph 45 of his report, that the Security Council consider the extension of UNOMIL's mandate for a period of four months, until 31 May 1996, deserves the support of the Council.

Before that date, shortly before the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 20 August 1996, the deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL, as well as disarmament and demobilization, should have been completed so that security will be improved.

My delegation wishes very sincerely to thank the Secretary-General for all the steps he has taken with a view to preparing for the elections to be held in the best possible conditions and, in particular, his plan to send a technical mission to work with the National Transitional Government, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ECOWAS in order to finalize a framework for the monitoring and verification of the electoral process.

We also welcome the remarkable work carried out every day, frequently in dangerous conditions on the ground, by local and foreign humanitarian organizations and the various programmes, United Nations organs and international institutions to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population and to aid in the rebuilding of the country.

It is important to note that in areas that are enjoying a return to security — in particular, near the Guinean border — the refugees are beginning to return to their villages, and normal economic activity is being resumed.

My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General's observation that the return to peace will depend largely on a revitalization of the economic sector that generates opportunities for the successful reintegration of former military personnel into civilian life.

For the moment, we must create the security conditions essential for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, with a view to the restoration of peace in Liberia. In this regard, it is important that the leaders of the factions and the National Transitional Government undertake to cooperate fully with ECOMOG and UNOMIL. This open cooperation with the international community, called for by the Secretary-General, constitutes the condition *sine qua non* for the pursuit of

the peace process, which is the only guarantee of the country's survival. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the positive steps announced earlier by the Liberian Foreign Minister.

I would like to conclude by paying a well-deserved tribute to the men and women of ECOMOG, UNOMIL and the humanitarian organizations, who risk their lives everyday for the return of peace to Liberia, and I bow my head in memory of those who have died for the cause of Liberia.

The President: I thank the representative of Senegal for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Gambia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): I would first of all like to join my colleagues who have already spoken in congratulating you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to thank you and all the members of this body for kindly facilitating my delegation's participation in the consideration of this important agenda item, on the situation in Liberia, at this open meeting. Under your wise guidance and competent leadership, I have no doubt that our deliberations will yield fruitful results.

I would also like to express my delegation's appreciation for the Council's previous expression of support for the people of Liberia and its recognition of the useful role the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been playing in finding a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the Liberian conflict. The Council's support is a great source of encouragement to Liberians in particular, and all Africans in general, in their resolute effort to resolve the problem in Liberia and its attendant human sufferings and material damage.

I would also like to extend my delegation's sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his now-familiar request to the international community for humanitarian assistance to Liberia. This gesture and other commitments of the United Nations to Liberia and its rehabilitation process strike a deep chord of gratitude in our hearts, and we wholeheartedly wish to express our thanks to all those who have been contributing financially and materially to this noble and humane objective.

In the same vein, I would like to convey my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the excellent report now before the Security Council.

It is gratifying to note that the situation in Liberia is beginning to improve once more, following the recent regrettable setbacks in the peace process. The incident at Tubmanburg dealt a serious blow to the peace process. These incidents or setbacks notwithstanding, the Abuja Agreement is generally holding, with every effort being made for its continued implementation. This is an encouraging sign for the international community, and therefore calls for renewed and redoubled support and assistance. In particular, there is a great need to strengthen and continue the peace process in Liberia by maintaining the presence of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and by providing greater financial and material resources to ensure a sustained programme of national recovery and reconstruction.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General, which my delegation fully supports, we note that the Secretary-General addresses a number of serious issues relating to the peace process and to the need to keep it constantly on track. The general picture that emerges from this report shows that all is not lost. The various organs necessary for implementing the Abuja Agreement are in place and functioning. Socio-economic activities are going on, and it is noted that many United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are continuing their professional and humanitarian activities in Liberia.

My delegation also notes the ongoing efforts to stem the spreading tide of military clashes and other violations of the Abuja Agreement, and violations of the human rights of civilians. In this connection, my delegation calls on the recalcitrant local warlords to pledge once more their commitment to the peace process and strict adherence to its various provisions ensuring progress towards general elections in August this year.

Attainment of the goals of the Abuja Agreement requires that we support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General. The Gambia supports the Secretary-General's recommendations, contained in paragraph 45 of his report (S/1996/47), to extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a period of four months, until 31 May 1996, and to complete the full deployment of the Mission. My delegation would also like to echo the Secretary-General's appeal to the international community to reconsider and increase its current level of support to

the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and to ensure that the necessary logistical assistance is provided to enable it to carry out its demanding responsibilities in Liberia.

It is fitting at this stage to pay tribute to ECOMOG for its heroic work in Liberia and to extend our deepest condolences to the families of all its members who have been killed in the line of duty. This is a noble sacrifice that is not lost on us, and to which we pay due tribute. We also express our thanks and our heartfelt sympathy to all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations that have suffered various setbacks, some of them tragic, in the execution of their onerous duties in Liberia. We sympathize with the families of those civilians who have been killed.

Lastly, my delegation wishes to express solidarity with the people of Liberia and to assure them of the Gambia's continued support and assistance.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Ghana. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamptey (Ghana): Let me join in congratulating you, Sir, on the work you are doing as President of the Security Council. I wish also to thank you for this opportunity to address the Security Council once more on the question of Liberia, a subject of great importance to my country and to other African countries.

Only four months ago, in mid-September 1995, I had the honour to inform the Council of the positive developments in Liberia: the signing of the Abuja Agreement on 19 August 1995 by all the parties to the Liberian conflict, in which they agreed to lay down their arms and work towards peace in their country. In my statement then, I noted that after many false starts and failures, we could see the light at the end of the tunnel leading to the end of the six-year-old fratricidal war in Liberia. I called on the international community to shoulder its responsibility to turn the hope for permanent peace into reality.

I briefed the Security Council about the programme of actions that would lead to free and fair elections in Liberia on the road to ordered civil life, of which the Liberian people have been robbed for over half a decade. On behalf of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President J. J. Rawlings of Ghana, I called on the United Nations to assume a more active role in pursuing peace in Liberia, by urgently making available the resources needed to preserve the positive momentum for peace, which we would have an uphill task to restore once lost.

The importance of an early solution to the Liberian problem was underscored by the convening of the Conference on Assistance to Liberia, co-chaired by the Secretary-General, the current Chairman of ECOWAS and the Chairman of the Liberian Council of State, on 27 October 1995. At that pledging conference, all speakers — representatives of some of our countries — underlined the urgent need for financial and logistical assistance to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and to Liberia if the ambitious peace programme was to be successfully implemented. We are most grateful for the assistance pledged at the Conference and for assistance offered since then by some concerned States. However, I regret to note that not only are the pledges slow to be redeemed, but the amounts offered are grossly inadequate and do not reflect the expressed sentiment of the international community that it wishes to see the Liberian conflict put behind us.

We do not ask for much. But, at the risk of flogging a dead horse, let me echo the words of my Head of State at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations:

> "We cannot help being struck by the fact that the international community is willing to spend $5 million a day on United Nations peace-keeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina — and we do not begrudge those noble people such international solidarity ... — but when we have asked for a sum that represents 10 to 15 days of that bill to help [Liberia], there is a deafening silence". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 38th meeting, p. 3)*

ECOMOG troop contributors and ECOWAS member countries are determined to pursue the objective of peace in Liberia, even at great cost to our struggling national economies. Let me say that my President restated the commitment firmly just a couple of weeks ago, saying that no matter what happened in Liberia Ghana and ECOMOG would stay there to see the attainment of the objective of peace and civil society there. Our need for logistical and financial contributions

to ECOMOG from the countries represented here continues to be paramount. We insist that the international community, represented by the Security Council, has yet to show enough interest in the situation in Liberia, which, compared to the situation in other zones of conflict, does not demand too much for a successful resolution.

Where do we stand now? As has been made abundantly clear, the reluctance of the international community to pay serious attention to Liberia with material assistance is beginning to reflect negatively on the peace process. The report of the Secretary-General says it all. The lack of resources means that ECOMOG has not been able to deploy troops all over the country as quickly as desired. The disarmament and demobilization of combatants remain behind schedule, and the skirmishes between some factions and ECOMOG have led to casualties on all sides and among the civilian population, a situation which it is within the reach of the international community to halt.

The Liberian national Council has reiterated its commitment to continue cooperating with ECOMOG and UNOMIL to keep the peace process on track, and we in ECOMOG are determined to continue our search for peace. I would say that the light at the end of the tunnel, which we all applauded in the last quarter of 1995, is beginning to grow dim. But there is still hope and we can build on the successes that we have so far achieved.

Let us take this meeting as another opportunity, another step by the international community to seek concrete assistance for ECOMOG and the Liberian people. In that part of the world, the effective maintenance of international peace and security is within our reach. This opportunity should not be allowed to slip away. Let us grasp it and with concrete deeds assure the people of Liberia a quick return to permanent peace and normality, which, like all of us, they rightly deserve, and they expect of us. It is our common responsibility, and we cannot afford to fail.

The President: I thank the representative of Ghana for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Guinea. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Camara (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): I wish at the outset to offer you my warmest congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for January. I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, and to reiterate the support and gratitude of my country, the Republic of Guinea, and particularly its President, General Lansana Conté, to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose initiatives, actions and resolve continue to help counter the dynamic of war and sometimes to avert it altogether in many countries whose populations face the danger of the sort of fratricidal conflict we have seen in Liberia. Lastly, I wish through you, Mr. President, to thank the other members of the Security Council and all those who, in the field and sometimes at great risk and peril, are helping to restore peace in Liberia.

My country's vulnerability to the collateral effects of the situation in Liberia is hardly surprising, given the historical and geographical links between our two peoples. Beyond this aspect, and aware of its twofold position as a founding member of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), my country continues to play a very active role in the Community's Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and to shelter more than 600,000 Liberian refugees in its territory. Moreover, in bringing the leaders of all the Liberian factions together in Conakry last November, my Government again gave proof of its determination to work for the restoration of lasting peace in that brotherly country. That is why, having studied the Secretary-General's very informative report, my delegation feels that the dividing line between respect for and violation of the Abuja Agreement has grown so tenuous that, given its particular urgency, the situation in Liberia requires renewed thoughtful consideration rather than hasty or improvised measures.

Though we must welcome the clear resolve of all factions to implement the Abuja Agreement, it would be naive to believe that, without the political support, and particularly the financial and logistical support, of the international community, such incidents as that which occurred in Tubmanburg, and which we deeply deplore, will not recur simply because the protagonists have given their word.

In endorsing the Secretary-General's recommendations, I should like to ask the Council, first, to consider extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for an additional four-month period; secondly, to appeal to the Liberian National Transitional Government and the faction leaders to extend their full cooperation to ECOWAS and

UNOMIL in order to stabilize the situation and make rapid progress in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, since elections are scheduled for August 1996; thirdly, to call on the international community to continue providing the resources which ECOMOG requires to carry out its responsibilities effectively; fourthly, to urge those who are helping to finance disarmament and demobilization operations to invest in socio-economic projects so as to ease the reintegration of ex-combatants; fifthly, to consider offering protection and humanitarian assistance to the displaced populations and refugees within Liberia and to Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries, such as Guinea; and, lastly, to call on the international community to give renewed priority consideration to its support for ECOMOG and to ensure that the necessary assistance is extended to that force.

To put the Liberian situation into context, we must not forget that, as we speak, hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees and displaced persons are dying of hunger and disease. The task before the international community is certainly enormous, but not impossible. We must understand that what remains to be done can be done only if we work together to silence the guns in Liberia, where for the first time a group of African countries is committed to settling a regional conflict.

For the sake of the mission of peace, solidarity and social order to which we are all duty-bound, let us agree once and for all to come to the aid of the Liberian people in order to make it possible for them in the near future to live in a world of justice and harmony.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea for her kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Togo. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ta'ama (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): The Togolese delegation would first of all like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the skill with which you are conducting the Security Council's deliberations, and to thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak before the Council on the situation in Liberia.

We wish particularly to thank the Secretary-General for his most thorough report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, which covers developments in the situation in Liberia since the report of 18 December 1995 (S/1995/1042), and the implementation of UNOMIL's new mandate.

As we read the report, there is a temptation to believe that the hopes born out of the peace process set in motion by the signing of the Abuja Agreement in August 1995 are on the road to extinction, and we are tempted to say to ourselves that once again the rock of Sisyphus has rolled back down. Indeed, while the international community as a whole welcomed the signing of the Agreement to the point of showing its satisfaction in concrete terms by pledging substantial contributions at the last Conference on Assistance to Liberia, and while the States Members of the Economic Community of West African States saw their tireless efforts to put an end to the violence and chaos in Liberia as finally being rewarded, were we to be forced to accept the idea that we had been wrong and that the dogs of war would again win out over the forces behind the momentum for peace? Naturally, my delegation's response is that no, we have not been wrong.

In our view, the hardest part came after the Agreement had been signed. Six months cannot wipe out the rancour, the frustrations, the ambitions and the hatred of a war so rich in atrocity as the one in Liberia. Confidence cannot be restored as easily as it was once destroyed. The cease-fire violations that have taken place here and there are, if I may say so, par for the course.

You can be sure, Mr. President, that it give me no pleasure to say what I am about to, but I shall do so because I believe I have to, because I must appeal to the members of the Security Council and, through them, to the international community not to yield yet again to the prevailing mood of afro-pessimism and make Liberia yet another orphan of peace.

The mandate the Council granted UNOMIL — which my delegation welcomes — under resolution 1020 (1995) of 10 November 1995 is a good and relevant one; what it needs is more effort and more will to carry it out.

Thus, our efforts in respect of the factions must be directed towards prevailing on them to respect fully the commitments they entered into, of their own free will, at Abuja, and to relearn the reflexes of peace. It is up to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and UNOMIL to play their allotted roles to the full, despite the risks and dangers, in

disarming the troops, in cantoning them in their allotted areas and in reintegrating the former combatants.

My delegation reaffirms that it is entirely the responsibility of the Council of State to seek ways and means, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, to maintain the momentum of the peace process and establish the necessary basic conditions for genuine national reconciliation in Liberia.

Taking our lead from the Secretary-General, we can remind the international community as a whole that the peace process that was set in motion thanks to its exemplary support is now at a crucial turning-point. The international community's support is therefore once again needed to counter the setbacks that have occurred in implementing the peace Agreement. That being the case, and if the financial resources are sufficient, there can be no doubt that the various players will shoulder their responsibilities, be they ECOMOG, UNOMIL, United Nations institutions or the non-governmental organizations working in the fields of human rights, and humanitarian law, or on the return of refugees or the elections to establish a democratic regime.

For its part, the Government of Togo, and the President of the Republic in particular, General Gnassingbé Eyadéma, have on no occasion held back in their efforts to contribute whatever they could to solving this sad crisis. They will continue to do so in the full awareness — and this is something our President never fails to stress — that Togo cannot go unscathed when it is its neighbour's house that is on fire. It is this same awareness, moreover, that has led the President, since the beginning of the crisis, to keep his door open to any faction that wishes to meet with him.

In conclusion, my delegation once again thanks the Security Council for its involvement, which has been crucial to the quest for a solution to the Liberian crisis, and hopes that the Council will extend UNOMIL's mandate, in so far as it is quite clear that more time is needed to make up for the delays in the timetable for implementing the Abuja Agreement.

In expressing this hope, my delegation would nevertheless remind the signatories to that Agreement, specifically, the various factions, that restoring peace depends first and foremost on no one but themselves, and that the international community obviously cannot support a peace process indefinitely if they themselves do not clearly demonstrate the political will to respect and implement the commitments they freely entered into. In this connection, the statement by the Foreign Minister of Liberia, for which we thank him, gives us hope.

The President: I thank the representative for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): Mr. President, the delegation of Nigeria welcomes you to the presidency of the Security Council during this month of January, and takes advantage of this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the professional manner in which Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation conducted the business of Council last month.

We welcome Chile, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Poland and the Republic of Korea as new members of the Council.

The current report of the Secretary-General, the fifteenth in the series, represents a further step in the continuing efforts by the international community to help solve the seemingly intractable conflict in Liberia. It has been submitted in pursuance of Security Council resolution 1014 (1995) of 15 September 1995, which extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 31 January 1996, and of resolution 1020 (1995) of 10 November 1995, which adjusted UNOMIL's mandate and approved a new concept of operations for it.

We have just listened to the very important statement by the Foreign Minister of Liberia on the current situation in his country. We thank him for his candour and objectivity in presenting a Liberian perspective on the subject matter before the Council. We cannot agree more with the view that the Liberian peace process needs to be assisted if it is to result in the consolidation of peace, thus clearing the way for national reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Six years ago, Nigeria's efforts to bring peace to Liberia culminated in the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), an international military intervention force of West African States under the authority of the Heads of State of ECOWAS. ECOMOG, which blazed the trail for subregional endeavours in crisis

management and conflict resolution, was conceived as a complement to the political and diplomatic efforts which were being deployed to find a just and lasting solution to the Liberian crisis.

Over the years, the several accords which had been painstakingly arrived at to resolve the Liberian crisis had failed to bring an early end to the conflict. From the failure of the Banjul accord to the collapse of the Bamako accord, to the failures of the four successive Yamoussoukro Accords and the Geneva accord, all efforts to resolve the Liberian crisis were frustrated by the failure of the parties to reach accommodation through compromise. Another round of accords, in Cotonou, Akosombo, and Accra, in spite of their promise, failed to bring the desired peace to Liberia. It was therefore a matter of satisfaction for my Government to have successfully hosted the Abuja meeting in August last year, which resulted in a breakthrough in the Liberian conflict.

Today we have a functioning Government in Liberia and a cease-fire which is generally holding. We would like to congratulate that Government for its continuing efforts to establish its authority throughout the territory and conduct the business of governance.

We are delighted to note that ECOMOG and UNOMIL do not see themselves in competition but, rather, in cooperation in Liberia. That is as it should be. UNOMIL's role can find form, content and import only if it collaborates with ECOMOG. In other words, it is only when ECOMOG is able, or enabled, to fulfil its role and carry out its responsibilities that UNOMIL can have any impact in Liberia. We all desire that UNOMIL should have such an impact. Liberia, as a faithful member of the international community, deserves to have such a United Nations presence in its territory, and it has so requested as it tries to deal with its political crisis. In this connection, we cannot but draw attention to the failure of the international community to deliver on its commitment to provide a force level of 160 military observers, as against the current level of only 82 such observers in Liberia.

We are greatly concerned about the continuing incidence of cease-fire violations and the slow pace of disarmament and demobilization of forces in Liberia. We are particularly distressed to note that the peace process in that country suffered a major setback with the attack on ECOMOG in Tubmanburg in December 1995 by General Roosevelt Johnson's wing of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J), resulting in a number of casualties, including Nigerians. The Government of Nigeria hopes that those responsible for this atrocity will be brought expeditiously to justice so that those of its countrymen who have paid the supreme sacrifice in the cause of peace in Liberia shall not have died in vain.

A clear message must issue from the Security Council to the Liberian parties that they cannot hold the peace process in Liberia hostage to their personal whims or political ambitions. The Liberian people are definitely tired of war. They desire peace, and peace must be given a chance. Besides, the countries of the subregion are straining to keep ECOMOG afloat, and countries such as mine, in spite of our domestic preoccupations and current circumstances, are determined that ECOMOG must succeed. ECOMOG has no partisan interest in Liberia; it is there only to help restore peace and a climate of confidence which can enable the political process to take root and bear fruits.

It bears repeating, therefore, that the solution to the Liberian crisis rests ultimately with the Liberians themselves. It behoves the Liberian authorities to provide a secure environment for ECOMOG, UNOMIL and the humanitarian organizations to carry out their respective mandates and minister to the needs of the civilian population, particularly the refugees and the internally displaced persons.

The task of disarmament and demobilization of the Liberian combatants, which number at least 60,000, is certainly arduous. It was in recognition of this that Nigeria decided to increase its contingent in ECOMOG by two battalions, aside from disbursing substantial funds for the procurement of communications and other vital equipment for the force. The capacity of ECOMOG is being constrained by inadequate logistic support. We therefore wish to remind those countries that had offered to provide such support not to renege, in the interest of peace and security in Liberia, on their commitment or promise. We also hope that countries will redeem their pledges of support to Liberia, in addition to their contributions to the Liberian Trust Fund. It is our honest view that the political programme in Liberia, including the elections scheduled for August 1996 under the provisions of the Abuja Agreement, can succeed only when disarmament, demobilization reintegration of disarmed combatants into civilian life and national reconciliation have been successfully carried out.

In concluding, let me say that the Security Council, for its own sake, and the international community at large

have a duty to stay the course in Liberia until peace is won. In line with the proverbial wisdom, the Liberian snake has been scotched but not killed. We therefore hope that the Security Council will see its way clear to extend UNOMIL's mandate for a further period of four months, until 31 May 1996. It is the honourable thing to do.

The President: I thank the representative of Nigeria for his welcome to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your accession to the presidency of the Council for this month and for the outstanding way in which you have guided its work. I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his excellent work last month.

We welcome the presence in the Council of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, whose statement on the development of the situation in his country is of great interest in the context of our current deliberations.

The signing by the Liberian parties of the Abuja Agreement on 19 August last year and the ensuing cease-fire were events of major importance, marking a crucial stage in the process of restoring peace to Liberia.

It should be emphasized that this was achieved only after several years of effort and sacrifice by several parties, particularly the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which, in cooperation with the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), played a key role in achieving the progress which eventually led to the signing of the Abuja Agreement. The international community warmly welcomed that event, and was optimistic that the Agreement would be implemented.

Unfortunately, this optimism was severely dampened after the outbreak of incidents in various parts of the country, the most violent being the fighting at Tubmanburg between a Liberian faction and ECOMOG forces, at a time when the ECOMOG forces, in cooperation with UNOMIL, were preparing to supervise the implementation of the next stage in the Abuja Agreement — the disarmament and demobilization of the belligerents.

According to the report of the Secretary-General dated 23 January 1996

> "the developments in Tubmanburg confirmed the risks ECOMOG had taken in deploying its troops without the strength and resources necessary to carry out its mandate effectively." (*S/1996/47, para. 5*)

That indicates how fragile the Agreement between the Liberian factions remains without peace-keeping forces having the necessary financial and logistic resources to successfully perform their task.

Tunisia, as a member of the Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, has constantly worked in the African community and at the international level to restore peace to Liberia. President Ben Ali spared no effort after assuming the presidency of the OAU to encourage the Liberian parties to sit down at the negotiating table to resolve the conflict between them.

My delegation supports the good offices efforts presently under way, involving representatives of the national Transitional Government, the Liberian factions, ECOWAS, the United Nations and the OAU.

We would earnestly appeal to the Liberian parties to refrain from any action likely to compromise implementation of the Abujan Agreement, and to exercise restraint so as to avoid any escalation following the latest incidents, particularly since progress towards peace in Liberia requires, above all, respect for the commitments entered into regarding implementation of that Agreement.

It is equally true that, to consolidate the peace process in that country, the international community must honour its commitments to provide assistance to Liberia. We would like to express the hope that the donor countries will provide increased assistance in order to respond adequately to the needs of the present stage of demobilization of the combatants and their reintegration into civilian life.

The assistance of the international community is also necessary to enable the ECOMOG forces to continue their efforts with the same effectiveness and efficiency.

We hope that extending UNOMIL's mandate for a further four-month period, as proposed by the Secretary-General, will, once sanctioned by the Security Council,

make it possible to continue efforts to consolidate peace in Liberia in a framework of regional and international cooperation, which remains of crucial importance for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Ethiopia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Eteffa (Ethiopia): May I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January and on your very effective leadership. I should also like to pay special tribute to the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Lavrov, for the competent and outstanding manner in which he presided over the affairs of the Council during the month of December. We also commend the Secretary-General for his concrete, thought-provoking and comprehensive report and observations, as reflected in document S/1996/47.

May I also express deeply felt appreciation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia for his briefing.

Fifty years ago Liberia was one of the three independent African countries, with leaders who commanded respect at home and internationally. Today, unfortunately, it hardly has a functioning Government that has effective control over its territory. Liberia deserves our sympathy and action. The people of Liberia, like people anywhere, are entitled to peace, stability and security. The situation in Liberia, which is before the Council, is of the utmost importance to the African countries and to our regional organization — the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It is therefore a privilege and an honour for me to participate in this debate today in my capacity as representative of the current Chairman of the OAU, His Excellency Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

It is quite some time since the plight of Liberia captured the attention of the international community. But the suffering of the Liberian people has not been alleviated. At times we saw promising signs and the signing of Agreements which appeared to represent a breakthrough. Unfortunately, however, some of the Agreements are violated before the ink on the documents has had time to dry.

Let us respond to the problems in Liberia with concrete action in terms of the commitment of financial resources and logistical arrangements for the peace-keepers as well as by extending the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), so that a lasting solution can be found to the plight of the Liberian people. It goes without saying that it is only the people of Liberia who can bring about a lasting political settlement to the problems of their country. The international community can only assist them to do so.

There should be a political settlement of the conflicts and the creation of a peaceful situation in Liberia before the legislative and presidential elections can take place in August 1996, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement. Of course, it would be naive to expect that free and fair elections can take place without demobilization of combatants and without extensive consultations which might lead to reconciliation and the creation of a generally conducive environment before the elections. Furthermore, the exchange of prisoners should be effected as agreed and the delivery of humanitarian relief assistance should flow, unhindered by any of the factions. The Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) should be allowed to function until elections take place in August. In this election process, the Secretary-General's recommendation in his report should be implemented; that is, that UNOMIL should be in a position

> "To observe and verify the election process, in consultation with the Organization of African Unity and ECOWAS, including the legislative and presidential elections to be held in accordance with provisions of the peace agreements". *(resolution 1020 (1995), para. 2 (g))*

It seems that there is a formidable task and a real challenge ahead of us to remove the increased and increasing insecurity in many areas of Liberia. Unless these challenges are met, it will not be practical to have meaningful elections in August. Along with the improvement of the security situation in Liberia, the process of disengagement, disarmament and demobilization should be dealt with as priority items.

The civilians who are displaced and trapped between ECOMOG and ULIMO-J forces outside Kle should be helped in every way possible, in order to release them as soon as possible; and while they are still trapped, humanitarian assistance should be rendered to them. All concerned should help this group of civilians and other

civilians in similar situations, and all other victims of the fighting should be assisted.

The recent agreement between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the LNTG in regard to the repatriation of the estimated 750,000 Liberian refugees should be implemented as part of the general process of creating a conducive environment for reconciliation and political settlement, which would eventually lead to recovery and reconstruction. The intended special consultation meeting of the LNTG and its international partners in March 1996 to address the problems of recovery is an undertaking which should be encouraged and assisted by the international community at large. The preparations toward this end should be under way shortly, according to the Secretary-General's recommendation. Needless to say, this is an effort in the right direction. However, real, positive results cannot be expected unless, to use the Secretary-General's words,

> "a safe and secure environment can be established throughout the country." *(S/1996/47, para. 43)*

The success of the peace process in Liberia, as much as it depends on the cooperation of the parties concerned, also requires greater commitment on the part of the international community. The cooperation and coordination among the United Nations, OAU and ECOWAS should be further strengthened. In particular, we wish to emphasize the need for ensuring adequate resources and logistical support required for the operations of UNOMIL and ECOMOG. The report of the Secretary-General before the Council indicates that the status of assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account leaves much to be desired. As regards the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia, we urge the international community to make generous contributions to the Fund, so as to enable ECOMOG to fulfil the challenging task of ensuring peace and stability in Liberia.

The Organization of African Unity closely monitors the situation in Liberia. The fifth ordinary session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, held in Addis Ababa from 18 to 19 December 1995, expressed its satisfaction at the conclusion of the Abuja Agreement that led to the establishment of a new Transitional Government in Liberia. While commending the current Chairman of ECOWAS, His Excellency President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and other leaders of West Africa for their untiring efforts to bring about peace in Liberia, the OAU Central Organ also appealed for international assistance to Liberia, and, in particular, for generous contributions to the Trust Fund established by the United Nations Secretary-General, in order to enable ECOMOG to fulfil its mandate. The OAU has also committed itself to provide financial support to assist ECOMOG in carrying out its important tasks.

We share the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report that, in spite of recent setbacks, the peace process in Liberia will succeed, given the full support and cooperation of all concerned. We therefore join the Secretary-General in urging the faction leaders to ensure observance of the cease-fire and to cooperate fully with ECOMOG and UNOMIL, in particular as regards the disarmament, disengagement and demobilization of combatants.

At the same time, we wish to point out once again that the success of ECOMOG in ensuring implementation of the Abuja Agreement depends a great deal on the availability of the necessary resources. In this regard, we call on the international community to provide such resources and logistical support as are critically important for the successful fulfilment of ECOMOG's tasks.

The cooperation and partnership existing between the United Nations, OAU and ECOWAS should be continued and further enhanced until a lasting political solution to the Liberian problem is achieved, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement. To this end, we call on the Security Council to extend UNOMIL's mandate to ensure its continued cooperation and coordination with the OAU and ECOWAS in the fulfilment of the challenging tasks of ensuring peace and stability in Liberia.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Czech Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency for January 1996, and to thank Ambassador Lavrov for the excellent job he did as President last month — the last month of our own tenure on the Council. Also, I wish to congratulate new Council members: Chile, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of Korea and especially

Poland, which has assumed the seat reserved for our regional group.

One may wonder how the interests of the Czech Republic are specially affected by the situation in far-away Liberia, such that we would be granted the privilege of participating in the discussion under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. We feel that Article 44 of the Charter provides us with grounds to participate, inasmuch as the employment of contingents of the Czech armed forces is involved. In fact, the Czech Republic is the only European country that actually participates in the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). These remarks of ours would thus have been addressed to the troop-contributors meeting, but we are grateful to the Council for having provided this opportunity to actually get them on record, and it is an honour to speak in the presence of the Foreign Minister of Liberia.

We find the Secretary-General's report alarming. Hopes concerning the peace process in Liberia have flowed and ebbed, but they definitely crested with the signing of the accord in Abuja. All along, the Security Council has warned at various times when deciding on the UNOMIL mandate that, if significant improvement is not attained, this time might be the last time the mandate is extended. We do not consider the fighting in Tubmanburg and the casualties suffered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to constitute such an improvement, to state the obvious. We salute ECOMOG and the memory of its fallen comrades and extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

We strongly condemn the attacks by ULIMO-J. Such outbreaks severely stretch the willingness of disinterested countries to continue assisting Liberia. In the light of these events, the Czech Republic has very seriously reflected on the future of UNOMIL and on the purpose served by exposing its own participants to the attendant dangers. In our final evaluation, though, we feel that the conflagration caused by ULIMO-J has not spread into other areas of the country. At this moment at least, we do not see a pandemic civil war erupting again. The important thing now is to intensify pressure on Liberia's factions to meet their commitments, to provide security guarantees to ECOMOG and to UNOMIL, and to proceed with disarmament and demobilization. In turn, the factions will need concrete help as their members reintegrate into civilian life.

Upon careful consideration, my authorities have reached the conclusion that withdrawing our support from UNOMIL, modest though it is, would at this time be unfortunate. We therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNOMIL's mandate be extended by several months, and we will continue participating in the Mission. However, as many Members have stated many times — and the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, who has just addressed the Council, was just the most recent in this long line — the primary responsibility for the future of Liberia lies with the Liberians themselves, including ULIMO-J. In the event of future serious threats to the security of UNOMIL, of ECOMOG or indeed of the Liberian people, my country will be prepared to seriously re-evaluate our continuing support for UNOMIL.

The President: I thank the representative of the Czech Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

The final speaker is the representative of Côte d'Ivoire. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Kaba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): I apologize for the absence of Ambassador Kacou Gervais; he is at present engaged in the work of the Economic and Social Council.

Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on the diligent way in which you are guiding the work of the Security Council this month. I also thank your predecessor for his good work last month. My delegation wishes the new members of the Security Council success during their tenure, and thanks the outgoing members for their valuable contribution to the work of the Council.

Liberia is a brother and neighbour of Côte d'Ivoire. Our families are intertwined, and everything that affects Liberia inevitably affects Côte d'Ivoire as well; hence the fraternal hospitality my country has extended to Liberian refugees. It is because of our warm, fraternal friendship for the people of Liberia that the Government of Côte d'Ivoire is making efforts towards the restoration of peace in that country. Everyone is aware of my Government's initiatives to bring to this afflicted fraternal country the peace it so greatly needs; the various Yamoussoukro Agreements have been an important element in the Liberian peace process.

The excellent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Liberia leads us to consider a number of

points, including the role of the United Nations in Liberia. We consider that its role has been a positive one, and we hope it will continue until Liberia has restored its full internal balance. The United Nations should not withdraw its support from Liberia at a time when stability is being restored through efforts aimed at bolstering national institutions, including through free, democratic elections under the auspices of the Liberian National Transitional Government.

Côte d'Ivoire is playing an active part in the combined efforts of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States to bring about the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. We hope that, at a time when there is movement towards a final resolution, the international community will not abandon Liberia in mid-stream. My Government hopes that these efforts will continue. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General, set out in his report, document S/1996/47 of 23 January 1996, to renew the mandate of UNOMIL and provide ECOMOG with the resources it needs to carry out its mission.

I wish in conclusion to offer the condolences of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to the families of the victims of the Tubmanburg incident.

My delegation thanks all those who are contributing to the restoration of peace in Liberia.

The President: I thank the representative of Côte d'Ivoire for the kind words she addressed to me.

There are no further speakers.

This is, in the nature of things, not a meeting for drawing formal conclusions or making decisions. I would like just to say that I think that this occasion has proved a useful exchange in this formal, and therefore open and transparent, mode, and that our discussion this morning has been enriched by three features: first, by the presence of the Foreign Minister of Liberia himself, to whom we are grateful for having taken the trouble to come and to speak to us in this way; secondly, by the happy coincidence that this meeting came very shortly after the return from Liberia of Ambassador Albright and her briefing to us before she had even had a chance to debrief to her own Head of State; and, thirdly, of course, by the fact that we have had this discussion enriched by a wider airing of views by other Member States which are not at present on the Security Council itself.

As I said, it is not, I think, for the presidency in this case to try and draw conclusions from this meeting, but I think it is fair to highlight some of the many elements which were raised in this wide-ranging discussion. I have in mind particularly that more or less all speakers emphasized that the peace process in Liberia is now at a critical juncture; secondly, that the efforts of everyone concerned will be required if recent setbacks are to be overcome; thirdly, that in this there is a complementarity between national, regional and wider international efforts; fourthly, that all speakers underlined the need for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to have our continued support and highlighted — at least some speakers did — the question of resources and logistic support in that connection; and, finally, that many speakers made the point that the conflicts and ambitions which are at loggerheads in Liberia seem to be those among the élite, not among the people at large. And the conclusion was drawn by some in their interventions that the main responsibility therefore lay with the leaders of the parties and the factions in that country.

This wider discussion today, at this first reading of the Secretary-General's report, will be very useful background for those of us who are members of the Council and who now have to proceed to further consideration of the Secretary-General's recommendations — namely, for the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until the end of May, with provision for a progress report by the end of March. Those further consultations will take place imminently. May I just remind everybody in closing that there will also be a troop-contributors' consultation on UNOMIL tomorrow afternoon.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.